

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARA-06 NEA-10 EA-07 IO-13 DHA-02  
CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06  
PRS-01 SP-02 CU-02 ACDA-07 /077 W  
-----260637Z 105147 /15

R 251530Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4039  
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD  
:AMEMBASSY LONDON 7559  
AMCONSUL MUNICH

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 4039

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CSCE, SHUM, SCUL, SREL, UR, US, UK  
SUBJECT: MOSCOW CONCERANCE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

REF: (A) MOSCOW 2307, (B) STATE 58406, (C) LONDON 04478

1. EMBASSY HAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (REF A) ON SOME DETAILS PROVIDED BY L. V. SCHERBAKOV OF COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS CONCERNING UPCOMING MOSCOW CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS. IN A RECENT FOLLOW-UP TELEPHONE CONVERSATION, HE WAS NOT ABLE TO ADD ANYTHING NEW.

2. WE NOTE AN ITEM IN MARCH 22 IZVESIYA ANNOUNCING THE CONSLUSION OF A THIRD SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE, WHICH HAS BEEN MEETING DURING MARCH TO PLAN AND PREPARE FOR THE CONFERENCE. ACCORDING TO THIS BRIEF REPORT, THE CONFERENCE ISSCHEDULED FOR JUNE 6-10 AND BEARS THE NAME "RELIGIOUS LEADERS FOR A FIRM PEACE, DISARMAMENT, AND JUST RELATIONS BETWEEN PEOPLES". THE COMMITTEE, DESCRIBED AS INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MAJOR FAITHS FROM BELGIUM, GDR,POLAND, HUNGARY, BULGARIA, CUBA, INDIA, NEPAL, VIETNAM, YEMAN ARAB REPUBLIC, CZECHOSLOVAKIA,  
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FINLAND, MONGOLIA, PHILIPPINES, FRG, JAPAN AND "OTHER COUNTRIES," ATTENDED A RECEPTION RECENTLY GIVEN BY PATRIARCH PIMEN.

3. WE ALSO NOTE THE IDENTICAL LINE USED BY SOVIETS IN THEIR APPROACHES IN LONDON (REF C), IN MOSCOW (BY SCHERBAKOV IN CONVERSATION WITH RABBI SCHNEIER AND

EMBASSY OFFICERS) AND APPARENTLY ALSO IN THE US. (REF B)-- THAT SOVIET AUTHORITIES ARE ANXIOUS TO HAVE JEWISH GROUPS (AND OTHERS) FROM THE WEST ATTEND THE CONFERENCE, EITHER AS DELEGATES, OBSERVERS, OR GUESTS. THE PITCH ALSO INCLUDES ASSURANCES THAT SUCH GROUPS NEED NOT FEAR THAT THEIR COUNTRY AND GOVERNMENT WOULD BE SINGLED OUT FOR UNFRIENDLY CRITICISM.

4. BEGIN COMMENT. IT SEEMS OBVIOUS THAT SOVIET AUTHORITIES WISH TO HAVE THE BROADEST POSSIBLE REPRESENTATION FROM THE WEST AT THE CONFERENCE, AND FOR THE SAKE OF SUCH ATTENDANCE MAY BE WILLING TO TONE DOWN THE RHETORIC. BUT THE THEME OF THE CONFERENCE IS SELF-EXPLANATORY AND SELF-SERVING AND LENDS ITSELF TO BROAD-BRUSH PROPAGANDA EXPLOITATION, EVEN IF THE SOVIET BLOC AND ITS ALLIES REFRAIN FROM EXCESSIVE POLEMICS IN SPEECHES AND RESOLUTIONS. THE TIMING OF THE CONFERENCE VIS-A-VIS BELGRADE IS OBVIOUS.

5. IF U.S. GROUPS DECIDE TO ATTEND, THEY SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THE SOVIETS PROBABLY INTEND TO DERIVE BENEFIT FROM THEIR PRESENCE (ON THE EVE OF BELGRADE) BY: --PORTRAYING THE EXISTENCE OF HARMONY AND UNITY OF VIEWS AMONG RELIGIOUS GROUPS OF DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS ON THE SUBJECTS OF PEACE AND DISARMAMENT, AND --DISPLAYING THE USSR AS A COUNTRY WHERE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FLOURISHES AND WHERE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ALL DENOMINATIONS (INCLUDING JEWS) CAN MEET IN A CLIMATE OF TOLERANCE.

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AT THE SAME TIME, THE VERY FACT THAT MOSCOW BADLY NEEDS THEIR PRESENCE PROVIDES SUCH GROUPS (IF THEY DO DECIDE TO COME) WITH LEVERAGE IN KEEPING IDEOLOGICAL RHETORIC DOWN TO A PERHAPS MANAGEABLE MINIMUM, PROVIDED THEY ADOPT FIRM POSITIONS AND DISPLAY READINESS TO ARTICULATE THEIR VIEWS AT THE CONVENTION. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT ATTENDANCE AS "GUESTS", WITHOUT THE RIGHT TO SPEAK OR VOTE, GUARANTEES A STATE OF IMPOTENCE AND SHOULD BE REGARDED AS THE LEAST DESIRABLE OF THE THREE AVAILABLE OPTIONS.

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## Message Attributes

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